

SITUATION REPORT NO. 4
INCIDENT NO. 99-009
DATE: March 31, 1999 TIME: 3:00 p.m.

TO: Governor Edward T. Schafer
State Capitol
Bismarck, ND 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Spring flooding – Above normal soil moisture content throughout North Dakota, compounded by seven years of flooding, has resulted in overland and river flooding.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: None reported.
3. DAMAGES: The Red River of the North had risen to 43.72 feet by March 31 in Grand Forks, where it is expected to crest early next week at 45 to 45.5 feet. Flood stage at Grand Forks is 28 feet. Flood waters have now reached the bottom edges of the Riverside, Central and Lincoln dikes. Grand Forks public works staff, who participated in an aerial surveillance of the Red River area on March 29, reported that the English Coulee Diversion and the English Coulee, from its main stem to the dry dam, are in good condition. However, an isolated problem exists along one nearby road where water from the diversion is backing up. Public works staff also reported that 10 to 15 miles south of Grand Forks, ice in the Red River is breaking up. North of Grand Forks to Oslo, MN, the river's ice has already broken up. Ice jams throughout the Red River are causing the river level to fluctuate. Along the Red Lake River, a tributary of the Red River, ice break-up has occurred in the river's main stem. In the Grand Forks area, overland flooding in the county has begun to subside, but water levels are high in major drains. Overland flooding has created concerns for three businesses along 32nd Avenue South, which is located southwest of Grand Forks. Swift-flowing runoff has eroded a ditch, causing water to backup and travel north toward 32nd Avenue South. Impacted businesses include the Grand Forks Grocery, where a sandbagging operation took place. The store is cycling water pumps on and off. Workers at the nearby Longview Fiber were worried that water may inundate their hydraulic lifts. The third business, Big Sioux Travel Plaza, closed because of water-related problems. Water has receded in the area and the road may be opened later March 31, depending on whether water surges again. Additional closures include Mill Road and Lewis Boulevard. As the Red River rises, city officials continue to close flood gates, flood-threatened roads and reinforce low spots on dikes. Recent gate closures occurred behind the riverside Dakota Hotel and at Seventh Avenue and Boyd Drive.

Grand Forks city officials are working closely with the NWS officials to review potential precipitation levels and their potential impacts likely from storms predicted to impact the state during the first weekend (Thursday through Monday) in April.

Walsh County officials have reported that several township roads have been inundated by flood waters from the Red and Morais Rivers. Most township roads in Pulaski and Walshville Townships east of I-29 are inundated or have no access. Road closures include 59th Street NE in Walshville Township, where the Morais River has inundated the road. County Road 2 has also been closed at several locations because of flood waters from the Red, Park and Forest Rivers.

As the Red River continues to rise, Pembina County officials expect flooding of low-lying areas near Drayton and along N.D. Highway 66, between the cities of Drayton and Robin. In preparation, Drayton workers are plugging storm sewers. The permanent diking structure in Drayton protects the city to 41-42 feet. The river is expected to crest at 40 feet on April 5-6; flood stage is 32 feet. The river level at Drayton measured 35.11 feet on March 31. The city of Pembina's permanent diking system protects the city to 58 feet. The Red River is expected to crest at Pembina at 49 feet on

April 8-9. Flood stage is 42 feet. The Red River had risen to 38.55 feet on March 31. Pembina officials will be monitoring reinforced clay dikes in south Pembina that collapsed during the 1997 flood. Flood-fight plans call for dike walkers to begin checking the city's diking system on a 24-hour basis for trouble spots once the river rises to 45 feet.

The Goose River continues to present problems for Traill County officials who reported that one home in rural Mayville and four homes in the Hillsboro Park area have been sandbagged. In addition, several portions of the Goose River Golf Course are under water, and the Hillsboro Park and Pool are inundated. Excessive runoff has also damaged a rural drain. The Goose River measured 13.60 feet on March 30, which is 6.6 feet above flood stage.

In southeastern North Dakota, runoff from recent precipitation and ongoing snowmelt continues to find its way into the Sheyenne River system, causing slow rises at locations that had begun to record falls in water levels. The National Weather Service (NWS) reported that releases from the Baldhill Dam will keep the Sheyenne River for the next several days within one foot of its 13-foot flood stage at Valley City and two to three feet above the 11-foot flood stage at Lisbon. Releases from the Baldhill Dam will cause the river at Kindred, which is at 11.2 feet, to rise to its 16-foot flood stage in early April. The river at West Fargo crested at 17.9 feet on March 30; flood stage is 16.5 feet. The river is expected to begin a slow fall at West Fargo based on releases from Baldhill Dam and forecasted precipitation.

McHenry County officials reported that since spring runoff began the county has been experiencing water over the roadways and washouts, isolating farm families. Livestock has been moved to higher ground. Logjams are causing problems at bridges crossing the Mouse River. County commissioners, with assistance from the county emergency manager, are conducting a damage assessment.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: No change from previous reports.

STATE: No change from previous reports.

FEDERAL: No change from previous reports.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTION: The American Red Cross has provided shelter to family members who were evacuated from their Walsh County home.

The Red Cross and United Way are coordinating volunteer services from the Grand Forks Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to include dike-walking and sandbagging efforts.

Volunteers from the community of Hillsboro and the local high school are helping with flood-fight efforts along the Goose River.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: In Grand Forks County, the EOC began 24-hour operations on March 30. Plans are in place to begin dike-walking patrols when the Red River rises to 44 feet. Four base locations will be operational for dike walkers. In preparation for rising waters, several private sandbag dikes are being constructed, and city officials have issued a request for sandbagging volunteers. Sandbag dike construction has also begun on

several city-owned properties to protect them to a 50-foot river level. To avoid flood-related problems, a backhoe is being used to break up ice in the English Coulee Diversion. All sluice gates have been closed, and water is being pumped from manholes.

The North Dakota Emergency Management State Director, Deputy Director and Operations Officer participated in a ground surveillance on March 31 of the Goose and Red Rivers with emergency managers from Grand Forks and Traill Counties. The State EOC staff has received maps from the Grand Forks EOC outlining flood-fight operations.

Walsh County public works crews are supplying sandbags and sand to rural residents living near rivers. To date, the county has delivered 4,000 sandbags and 40 yards of sand to rural residents.

The Walsh County Commission issued an emergency declaration on March 29.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: Assistance has been provided, as reported.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: USACE, Red Cross, consulting engineers and members of the N.D. Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD).
9. OTHER: Situation Reports published by the N.D. Division of Emergency Management are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is: <http://www.state.nd.us/dem>.

Douglas C. Friez, State Director